

State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Shepard Building
255 Westminster Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

Enclosure 4a
March 15, 2012

Deborah A. Gist
Commissioner

March 15, 2012

TO: Members of the Board of Regents

FROM: Deborah A. Gist, Commissioner

RE: *The Learning Community: Maximum Enrollment Request*

On February 2, 2012, The Learning Community submitted a charter amendment request to increase its maximum enrollment from 540 to 558 students (a 3.3% increase).

The Learning Community is committed to enrolling 63 students per grade level (21 students per classroom) in grades K-5, and 60 students per grade level (20 students per classroom) in grades 6-8, for a total of 558 students. The school strives for full enrollment in each classroom throughout each school year.

Due to a quirk of The Learning Community's original charter approval in 2004, initial funding covered only 100 students total in grades K and 1, rather than 120. As a result, the initial student cohort, in grade eight this year, is made up of only 40 students, rather than the 60 to 63 students at every other grade level. Now, as these eighth graders prepare to enter high school next fall, The Learning Community will be admitting a cohort of 63 new kindergartners for 2012-13. It is this one-time instance of more incoming students than outgoing students that prompted The Learning Community to seek an increase in maximum student enrollment.

The key criteria for granting such a request are the successes of the school's education program. This is consistent with the state's new focus on charter school quality. Under our new expectations only charter schools that are high performing should expand.

We examined the school's overall performance in relation to the state and sending districts; performance by demographic subgroups; and performance compared to demographically similar schools. Our analysis indicates that The Learning Community is a high performing school. We recommend that its request for an increase in maximum enrollment be approved.

Overall Performance

The Learning Community has outperformed its sending districts in all subjects every year since its first year of testing, in 2006. In 2011-12, The Learning Community's proficiency rates jumped by 12 percentage points in reading and 11 percentage points in math. The school met or exceeded state average proficiency rates for its tested grade levels in reading and math, and exceeded by wide margins the proficiency rates of its sending districts and weighted sending districts average in both subject areas (Charts 1 - 2).

CHART 1

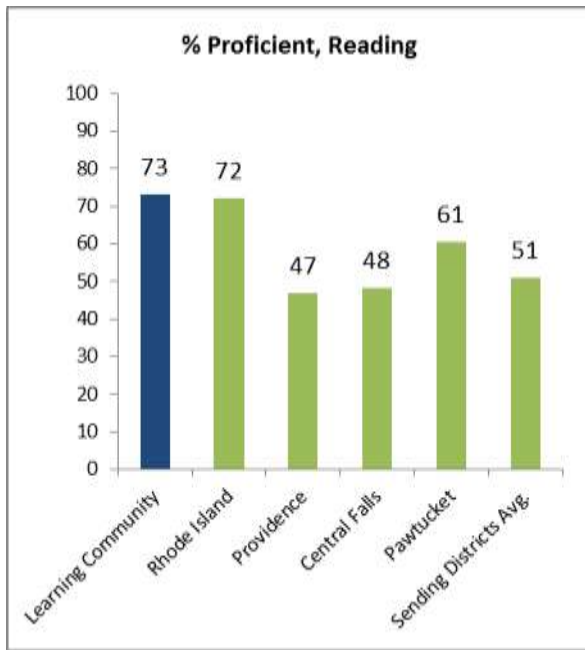
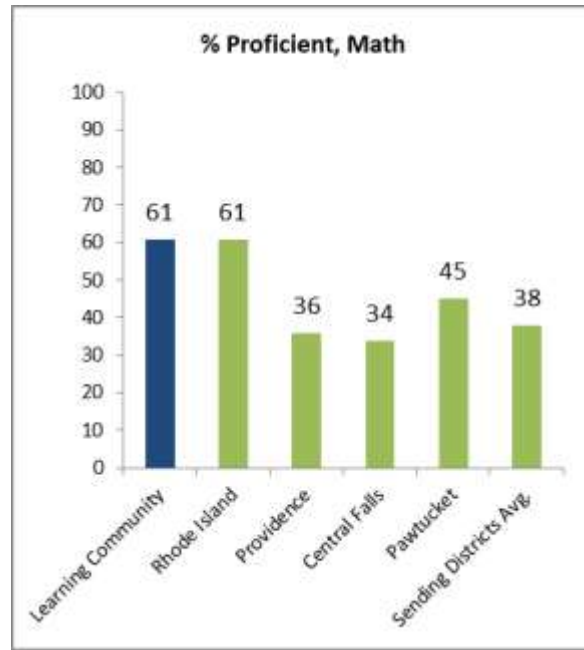


CHART 2



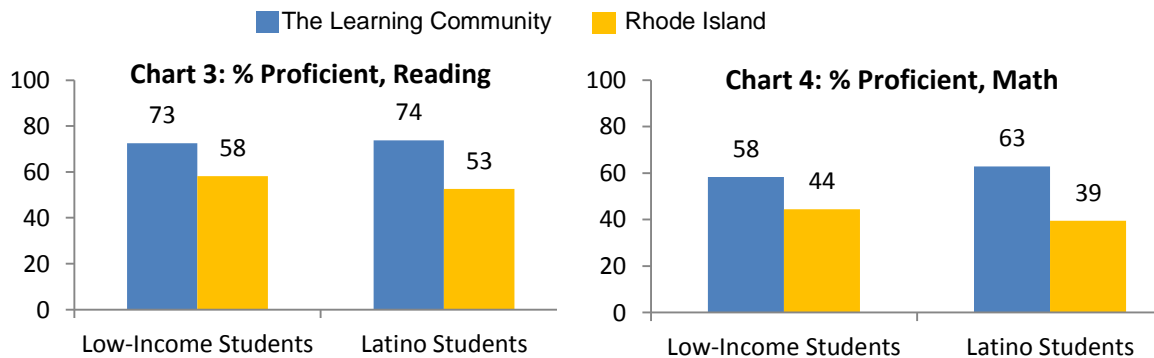
The Learning Community met or exceeded state average proficiency while serving twice the state average rate of socioeconomically disadvantaged students (students who qualify for free or reduced price lunch) and more than four times the average rate of English Language Learners. In fact, The Learning Community had a higher rate of socioeconomically disadvantaged students and English Language Learners than any of its sending districts (Table 1).

Table 1

	% Socioeconomically Disadvantaged (FRPL)	% English Language Learners
The Learning Community	90	26
Rhode Island	44	6
Central Falls	86	23
Providence	81	17
Pawtucket	74	12

Performance by Subgroups

Socioeconomically disadvantaged Learning Community students outperformed their socioeconomically disadvantage peers statewide by 15 percentage points in reading and 14 points in math. Latino students at The Learning Community outperformed their Latino peers statewide by 21 percentage points in reading and 24 points in math (Charts 3–4)

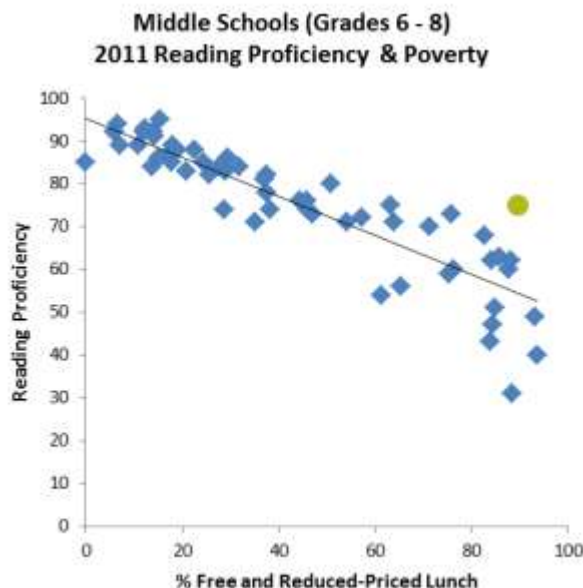


Telephone (401)222-4600 Fax (401)222-6178 TTY (800)745-5555 Voice (800)745-6575 Website: www.ride.ri.gov

The Board of Regents does not discriminate on the basis of age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, race, color, religion, national origin, or disability.

Demographically Similar Schools

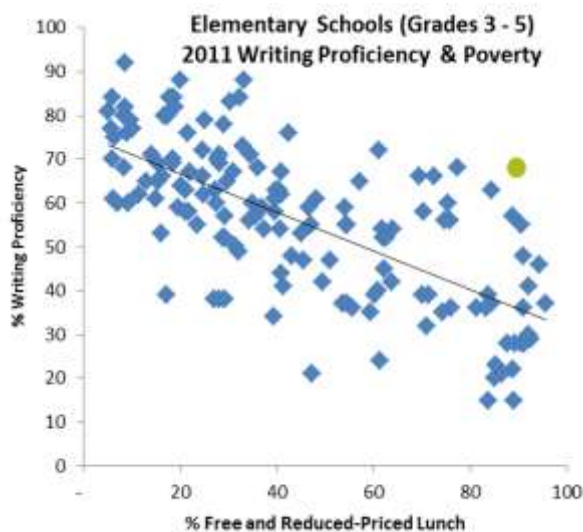
Both The Learning Community's elementary school and middle school performed very well relative to the "expected" performance of the school relative to its demographically similar peers. This was true across subject areas; we present two examples below.



The dots in the table to the left represent the 2011 reading proficiency rates (y-axis) and FRPL rates (x-axis) of each middle school in Rhode Island. The Learning Community's middle grades students, represented by the green dot, had a proficiency rate of 75% and a poverty rate of 90%.

The line ($y = -0.4556x + 95.197$) represents the predicted reading performance of middle grades students based on poverty. Learning Community middle grades students outperformed expectations by 21 percentage points.

The only schools that outperformed the Learning Community's middle grades in reading had FRPL rates of less than 51%.



The dots in the table to the left represent the 2011 writing proficiency rates (y-axis) and poverty rates (x-axis) of each elementary school in Rhode Island. The Learning Community's elementary students, represented by the green dot, had a proficiency rate of 68% and a poverty rate of 90%.

The line ($y = -.441x + 75.607$) represents the predicted writing performance of elementary students based on poverty. Learning Community elementary students outperformed expectations by 32 percentage points.

Only two schools with a poverty rate above 35% outperformed The Learning Community's elementary students in writing.

Conclusion

Our analysis indicates that The Learning Community is a high performing school. We recommend approval of its request for an 18-student increase in maximum enrollment.